

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVAITON OFFICERS REPORT

RE: SD21A/0139 – Lands bounded to the north by St Basil's Training Centre, to the east by Greenhills Road, to the west by Old Greenhills Road, and to the southeaster corner by Main Street, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Protected Structures

St. Basil's Training Centre, Greenhills Road, Tallaght (RPS. Ref 268) lies partially within the subject site. The following Protected Structures are adjacent or near to the subject site;

The Priory, Tallaght (RPS. RPS. Ref 269)

St. Mary's Dominican Priory, Tallaght (RPS. Ref 270)

St. Mary's Dominican Church, Tallaght (RPS. Ref 273)

Architectural Conservation Area

Tallaght Village is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area in accordance with Part IV of the Planning and Development Act (2000) as such related policy is included in South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022.

Appraisal

This is an application for a proposed development of; the demolition of three existing apartment units (c. 239sq.m) and bin store (c.18sq.m) and the construction of a residential development arranged in two building blocks (Block A & Block B) ranging from 3 to 6 storeys in height over basement level (c. 3,728sq.m, including basement). Block A comprises 11 residential apartments (c. 1256sq.m) in a 5 to 6 storey building and including a ground floor level cafe (c. 93sq.m) at the buildings south eastern corner; Block B comprises 15 residential apartments (c.1393sq.m) in a 3 to 5 storey building; The proposed development will comprise 26 new residential units (5 studio apartments, 6 1-bedroom apartments, 7 2-bedroom apartments & 8 3-bedroom apartments) with associated balconies and terraces.

The proposed development will comprise a total of 40 apartment units derived from 26 new apartments and 14 existing apartments; relocation of existing basement access on Old Greenhills Road and the upgrade and extension of the existing basement level ; provision of internal footpaths; landscaped communal open space (including outdoor gym equipment, children's play area and 'working from home' area); public open space; 13 car parking spaces and 74 long-stay bicycle parking spaces and 1 motorcycle parking spaces at basement level; 2 shared car parking spaces and 20 short-stay bicycle parking spaces at surface level (15 car parking spaces, 94 cycle parking spaces and 1 motorcycle parking in total); all piped infrastructure and ducting; elevation treatments; plant room; lift access and stair cores; hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatments; changes in level; waste management areas; attenuation tank; backup generator; solar photovoltaic panels; lighting; and all associated site development and excavation works above and below ground. The subject site is currently partly developed with an existing residential scheme known as Greenhill's Court comprising 17 apartment units in 4 apartment blocks ranging in height from 2 to 4 storeys, including basement car park all on a site of approximately 0.23ha.

The proposed development site lies within the original curtilage of St. Basil's Training Centre (former national primary school) and lies opposite to the site of Tallaght Priory, a Protected Structure site detailed above. The site is within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) of Tallaght Village and in

close proximity to Tallaght Main Street. The site location is highly visible within the village area, along Main Street on approach and from the Priory lands.

An architectural design statement has been provided as part of the planning application, however an Architectural Impact Assessment has not been provided nor has details been provided in accordance with the items advised in the Tallaght LAP, with regard to new development within or adjoining the ACA.

Having assessed the details provided as part of a design rationale it is felt that consideration has been given to the proposed material finishes, however the proposed scale, mass and height of the new apartment blocks and the overall visual impact on the historic built environment and has not been addressed in providing for a suitable development which will involve the demolition of three existing apartment units and bin store and the construction of a residential development arranged in two building blocks (Block A & Block B) ranging from 3 to 6-storeys in height over basement level.

The location of the proposed development close to the core area of the Architectural Conservation Area means that any development within this site will have an impact on the character of the ACA by virtue of its proximity to the historic building stock. It is considered that varying heights and levels with a mixture of materials and colours would add architectural interest which is greatly encouraged and will break up the mass of the blocks.

The palette of materials proposed should reflect the dominate materials of the existing buildings located within the village core and Priory Demesne adjacent, this includes red brick (limited use), stone, granite, limestone and render (limited use). The existing shared palette of materials found within the existing building stock should be reflected more adequately within any new build at this location. The proposed use of a light colour brick with a distinct brick design element does provide interest and architectural contrast with the surrounding buildings, however the height and scale need to be addressed within the overall site context to minimise the overall visual impact.

The proposed height and mass of the proposed development fails to provide a sensitive overall development at this location taken account of its close proximity to a number of Protected Structures and within an Architectural Conservation Area.

There is a need for greater understanding and awareness of the Architectural Conservation Area and the impact that inappropriate development can have on the overall character of the area. This can be mitigated against by preparing a design rationale for new developments which can demonstrate how the existing historic buildings and groups of structures which make up the architectural character of an ACA has informed and steered the design process, including a site analysis in this case as the site context is an important issue due to its prominent location and close proximity to the historic core of the village.

The overall design and height are important elements to recognise and highlight but the scale and mass of a development especially in sensitive areas of Main Street and adjacent to the cultural/historic core can also have a significant effect on the existing built environment.

It is advised that consideration should be given to the Tallaght Local Area Plan (2020) with regard to related policies and recommended building type and form. Section 6.0 of the Tallaght LAP provides guidance and requirements with regard to new development within or in close proximity to the Architectural Conservation Area. There are a number of policies in the Tallaght LAP which relate significantly to the proposed development given its prominent location adjacent to the Architectural Conservation Area along Old Greenhills Rd and Main Street and its location adjacent to Protected Structures, St. Basils and Tallaght Priory.

- *Overall design and height are important elements to recognise and highlight but the scale and mass of a development, especially in sensitive areas of Main Street and adjacent to the cultural/historic core, can also have a significant effect on the existing built environment.*
- *Scale and proportion of new buildings can have a varied affect upon the neighbouring buildings. If any new building dominates existing structures, the historic character might also be diminished, while a relatively indifferent design may heighten the historic qualities of the existing building.*
- *New developments should reflect the existing building stock and should be clearly read as modern interventions into the Main Street/Historic core.*
- *New development in particular along Main Street should have cognisance of the height, scale and mass of the historic urban form but should also add architectural interest and varied design within the mix to provide different architectural styles. All designs should be of high standard and finished to a high quality in terms of building material. The sensitive use of appropriate colour, texture and pattern of materials, whether traditional or contemporary.*

Under the 'Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines (2018)' specific requirements and guidance for the design of new build are provided. In accordance with these Guidelines (particularly Section 2.10), when considering new developments within the ACA of Tallaght, or areas adjacent to the designated area in close proximity to the village core, the design rationale and overall site context should act as the main driver for the overall scale, mass, height and design in achieving the best possible new development in these sensitive areas.

The height of the many of the other apartment buildings along Main Street do not exceed 3-storeys and are only 4-storey in height along the new section of Greenhills Road which is located furthest away from the village core, therefore the proposed height will allow the proposed development to be highly visible on approach from the village centre and will completely dominate the buildings and road junction at this location.

Conclusion

Given the issues and concerns detailed within the appraisal. It is considered that the proposed development is not acceptable within the context of the site and should therefore be refused for the following reasons:

Having assessed the details of the planning application and based on the above it is considered that the applicant has failed to address the overall visual impact that the scale and height of the proposed development will have within this prominent location, which is adjacent to a Protected Structure (St. Basils), within close proximity to Tallaght Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and a significant Protected Structure Site, 'The Priory'.

It is considered that the proposed development by nature of its close proximity, scale and height will directly impact on the visual quality adjoining Protected Structure site, St. Basils Training Centre (former National School, RPS Ref.268).

Concerns remain in that the character of the ACA will be significantly affected by the proposed apartment blocks as the new build will completely dominate the entire block which is highly visible on approach from Main Street and The Priory Demesne. The consequences of the proposed development may result in a diminished quality of character, which fails to address and adhere to existing policies for new development within or in close proximity to an ACA in line with SDCC County Development Plan (2016-2022) and the Tallaght Local Area Plan 2020.

It is considered that the proposed design with the use of light coloured brick and the insertion of brick design elements, tries to reflect elements of the existing building stocks palette. The overall finish and material type try to address the issue of a contemporary design which reflects the existing built environment and provides a level of interest and quality in providing a new build of interest is a welcomed part of the proposal. However, given that the issue of building height and mass of the proposed blocks, the overall impact cannot be negated by the design alone and therefore more consideration needs to be given to the site context and adjoining built environs.

Irenie McLoughlin
Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 12th July 2021